



# NEWS ADVISORY

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## **Governor Approves Housing Density Bill**

*Levine's AB 1537 changes Marin from 'metropolitan' to 'suburban'*

**San Rafael, CA** – Governor Jerry Brown has signed a Marin County-sponsored bill that recognizes the County and two of its cities as suburban rather than metropolitan for the purposes of future housing densities.

Assembly Bill 1537, authored by [Assemblymember Marc Levine](#) of San Rafael, lowers the default density of future housing developments from 30 units per acre to 20 units for the next [Housing Element update](#) of the [2007 Marin Countywide Plan](#).

The Governor signed the bill September 30. It passed in the California Senate on August 21 and the state Assembly on August 22.

AB 1537 is limited to altering the law in Marin only and applies solely to the next eight-year housing cycle from 2015-2023. This bill will allow the Board of Supervisors to consider including sites to accommodate lower income housing opportunities at a density of 20 units per acre, rather than the 30-unit per acre density previously required.

Marin County, the City of Novato and the City of San Rafael were designated by the state as metropolitan when default densities were first developed in 2004. Marin and its cities were then assigned the same default affordable housing density as the City of San Francisco simply because they are contiguous with San Francisco and included in the San Francisco Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Many residents in Marin voiced concern over the metropolitan designation because it is much more aligned with the character of large cities than with suburban areas such as Sonoma County. Marin's remaining cities and towns are already at the more suburban density of 20 units per acre. The new law creates a common suburban density of 20 units per acre countywide.

"We'd like to thank Assemblymember Levine for his perseverance in addressing this longstanding issue," said Marin County Supervisor Kate Sears, who serves as Board of Supervisors President. "Since the

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beginning, we believed that AB 1537 was a common-sense solution to a 10-year-old problem. We are pleased that state law now reflects that Marin is better characterized as a suburban county.”

Supervisor Susan Adams added, “Many people said this couldn’t be done, so we are especially thankful to all those who worked hard to move this forward. It’s a much-needed change. I appreciate Assemblymember Levine and Michael Lane of the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California who helped craft the language and helped advocate for the bill throughout the process.”

Marin sought to amend the default housing density several times in recent years to be more consistent with its suburban character. Sears said the new law enables the County to “meet its affordable housing responsibilities while better reflecting the unique qualities in each of our communities.”

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